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To: [HSSframework](#)
Subject: Ensure the historical contributions of historically excluded
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It is important, in the California framework for K-12 U.S. History and Social Science textbooks, to ensure the inclusion of the historical contributions of our Mexican American//Chicano/Latino people in American History. There has been a tendency to overlook this history or to marginalize it.

There is a need to ensure that the history curriculum includes a deepening of the systemic and structural aspects of inequity; that brings to center stage the contributions of our communities who (because of poverty, racism, sexism, classism, or homophobia) have historically been excluded from our textbooks; and that includes in the textbooks what projects our students can work on in finding solutions to these problems. Rather than a traditional monocultural education where the students learn very little about the contributions of the diverse mosaic which comprises the people of this country, our educational system needs to support a multicultural learning environment in which differences are embraced (not just tolerated). In this context, our institutions do need to appreciate our historical pluralism. But there is no getting around the reality that U. S. pluralism had its origins in laws and ideologies which were used to justify the stratification of different groups through conquest, slavery, and exploitation. If we don't absorb and appreciate this aspect of history in all its manifestations and ensure that it is included in our textbooks, there is the danger that we will maintain a society that blames the victim for his or her lack of social mobility. Our textbooks need to include the realities of the structural inequities that many of our underrepresented students and their families confront everyday in their communities.

In terms of bringing to center stage those who have been historically excluded, Anderson and Collins (1995) propose that this type of “reconstructing knowledge” requires moving from an exclusionary perspective to one that shifts “the center” to include “the experiences of groups who have formerly been excluded (p. 2). Such an inclusive perspective, one that puts at the forefront the experiences of those who have been historically excluded, has been the foundation of Ethnic Studies. Having emerged out of the movements of the 1960's and having been the basis for the establishment of Ethnic Studies, this trend is one that promotes the particular histories of individuals as part of appreciating the cultures and histories of the many people who make up this country. The outlook is that, in understanding our historical differences, there is a foundation to genuinely understand what unites us. At the same time, to meet the challenges of an increasingly global society, there is a need for students to learn about the contributions of the diverse mosaic that comprises the various people of the world. There are many examples in our history of individuals who belong at the center stage of our teaching and learning. These are individuals who have used their knowledge to point out injustices and who used their skills and abilities to empower their communities.

One of these individuals is Cesar Chavez whose birthday, March 31, is celebrated in California as a state holiday. Many of my students, particularly those who come to the United

States as immigrants or who are farm workers in the fields, can identify with Cesar Chavez. In particular, many of my students identify with how Chavez's views on nonviolence and morality were influenced by his mother and his grandmother. They identify with his struggles with racism in his school years when Euro-American children called him "dirty Mexican" (Griswold del Castillo and Garcia, 1995, pp. 5–6). Others identify with the story of how the Chavez family was stopped by immigration officials when they came to California from Arizona in the 1930's on the suspicion that they were undocumented immigrants. They identify with Chavez's life of fighting racism in all its forms and his consistent practice of building multi-racial coalitions to fight injustice. Additionally, many of my students identify with how Chavez resisted various forms of injustice by boycotting, marching, fasting, and engaging in community-based organizing strategies, which ultimately contributed to the building of the United Farm Worker's Union.

We have many other examples of individuals in our history that our students are often not taught about—examples who made a choice to use their skills and abilities as a means of service to the community, as a means of advancing spaces of equality in our communities. Two examples of such individuals are Michi and Walter Weglyn, in whose name I held an endowed chair position at Cal Poly Pomona for two years. They were examples of individuals who used their lives to conduct research and to use that research in service to the community and to advance social change policies.

They were examples, not only in the academic sense (with Michi Weglyn producing a book, *Tears of Infamy: The Untold Story of America's Concentration Camps*) but also in the participatory action sense. Hence, Michi Weglyn's book and efforts helped advance a movement that eventually led to reparations for more than 80,000 Japanese Americans interned during World War II and exposed the kidnappings of thousands of Japanese Latin Americans who were forced to serve as prisoners of war during that time.

Similarly, in the last decade, we have had a number of leaders pass away who, like Michi and Walter Weglyn, unconditionally paved the way in frontier areas of service, research, and action in our communities. We have the example of Kenneth Clarke who, along with his wife Mamie Clarke, studied the responses of more than 200 Black children who were asked to choose between a white or a brown doll. Their findings, which showed a preference of the children for white dolls, led to a conclusion that segregation was psychologically damaging and played a pivotal role in the *Brown vs. Board of Education* Supreme Court decision that outlawed segregated education. In recent years, we had the passing of Gloria Anzaldua whose book, *Borderlands*, courageously

critiqued both sexism and homophobia in the dominant culture as well as in her own culture.

With these examples, we should also remember Fred Korematsu, who was awarded the Presidential Medal of Freedom and other honors for his courageous spirit in arguing before the Supreme Court that incarcerating Americans without charge, evidence, or trial was unconstitutional. Alongside these examples of bringing to center stage individuals who created a pedagogy for social change is Martin Luther King, Jr. Not many of our students are taught that King was more than a community organizer. He entered Morehouse College at the age of 15 years old and graduated with a bachelors degree in sociology. Then, he enrolled in Crozer Theological Seminary and eventually received a doctoral degree from Boston University in systematic theology in 1955. King was a writer, a philosopher, a poet, an author, an activist, and the youngest individual to be awarded the Nobel Peace Prize.

Nevertheless, one of King's distinctions was that he put his studies, philosophies, principles, and values into practice for social change. Too often, this society tends to diminish the contributions of such individuals who dare to challenge the status quo and who dare to use both their intellectual and activist skills (against all odds) to fight injustice.

While it is important to bring to center stage the leadership of Martin Luther King, Jr., it is equally important to commemorate the thousands of people involved in the Montgomery Bus Boycott between 1955 and 1956, the Greensboro sit-in of 1960, and the marches for civil rights (e.g., the Selma to Montgomery, Alabama marches of 1965, etc.). It is also important to recognize the tenacity of the Montgomery Improvement Association to desegregate buses (a event that made Martin Luther King a nationally known figure). In recognizing the association, one must also acknowledge the courage of Rosa Parks, a seamstress by profession and a secretary for the Montgomery chapter of the NAACP, who refused to move to the back of the bus. It is also necessary to remember fifteen-year-old Claudette Colvin who, before Rosa Parks, was the first African American woman arrested (1955) for refusing to give up her seat (see Branch, 1988).

The actions in Montgomery, Alabama served as examples of a social movement involving a diversity of community-based organizers. For months, the African American community, with some support from other communities, responded to the arrest of Rosa Parks (as well as other discriminatory acts) by developing their own system of carpools—many used cycling and walking as alternatives to riding the bus. Their tenacity led to a November 13, 1956 Supreme Court ruling that Alabama's racial segregation laws for buses were unconstitutional (Branch, 1988).

Like Martin Luther King, Jr. and Rosa Parks, there are many other examples of everyday individuals who dreamed, who had a vision, and who used their skills and abilities to organize, to empower others, and to turn injustice on its head. Recently, I have asked students in my classes if they know these individuals. Many of my students don't know them. This is similar to recent studies that show that many college students know about the existence of a Cesar Chavez holiday, or a Martin Luther King, Jr. holiday, but know very little about the individuals themselves or the specific roles they played in the social movements that opened the doors to historically excluded groups in this country.

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